

Report of the Strategic Director to the meeting of the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 9th February 2022

Subject:

Quality Assurance and Audit in Children's Social Care Summary

Statement:

Quality Assurance Highlight Report on the Findings of the Monthly Case File Audits for the period October, November & December 2021

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

Equality assessments – no impact as the report is for information and discussion.

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Portfolio:

Children & Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children & Families

1. SUMMARY

Quality Assurance highlight report on the findings of the Monthly Case File Audits for the period October, November & December 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Case file auditing is an essential part of our quality assurance arrangements. Regular and in depth case file audits are a meaningful and useful method for understanding the experiences of our children and young people whilst examining practice against agreed Practice Standards, guidance, policy, and procedures.
- 2.2 The activity in this report relates to formal audit activity. This therefore does not reflect the routine quality-assurance that is conducted on a day to day basis by managers, practice supervisors and specialist workers such as Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers across the service.
- 2.3 Every month, Children's Services managers and Practice Supervisors complete case file audits. The audit case is allocated to managers via the central audit team, this ensures that managers will not audit work within their own team.
- 2.4 Auditing provides a measurable assurance to senior management as to the impact our involvement has on children and families.
- 2.5 Auditing generates themes and learning which is analysed to make recommendations for organisational practice improvement/development.
- 2.6 Feedback from auditing also provides information to identify learning needs and commission appropriate training and develop a learning culture by providing staff with an opportunity for in-depth reflection on their work.
- 2.7 Audit findings are presented to the Children's Social Care Management Team for action planning and cascading lessons learnt to frontline staff.
- 2.8 Audit findings are collated into a detailed, monthly report that is presented to the Improvement Board.
- 2.9 The monthly report is also shared with the Principal Social Worker so that identified strengths and learning can be incorporated into the training plan.
- 2.10 The audit process is underpinned by a coaching model, with audits being completed Page 51 alongside social workers to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their practice and develop professional competencies to improve their work.
- 2.11 Training and guidance is provided to all managers involved in auditing so as to ensure consistency in our auditing approach. A sample of completed audits are moderated each month to ensure quality and consistency in the auditing process. The moderation process allows the QA & Audit Team to monitor the grading quality of all audits, whilst providing in-depth support for auditors to develop their confidence.

- 2.13 Audit activity has confirmed that changes in social worker can impact the quality and in particular the timeliness of intervention. The stability of the workforce is a high-focus area for children's social care and in particular the recruitment of experienced social workers. This is a challenge for all Local Authorities given the number of experienced workers who move into management or specialist posts, or who choose to work for an employment agency. These workers are in short supply and there is a great deal of regional competition. Nonetheless we are introducing new mechanisms to try to further stabilise our workforce including the launch of the recruitment campaign completed with Ceriph. We are placing advertisements in professional publications and media and also working with employment agencies to secure permanent rather than agency staff.
- 2.14 Stabilising the workforce will allow staff to take opportunity of the training and learning that has been developed in response to the themes that have been identified by the audits. This will support the learning culture that is being promoted within the organisation.
- 2.15 To support compliance with audits, the audit tool has been reviewed and revised to ensure that it is streamlined, capturing the keys areas that we need to consider to understand the service that is being offered to our children and families.
- 2.16 To further support practice, the supervision and audit database will be launched in February 2022. This will allow for learning to be monitored through supervision to address themes and support learning, whilst ensuring that any identified work from the audits has been completed to improve outcomes for children and their families.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 None.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1.2 Not applicable.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

7.2.1 Not applicable.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.3.1 Not applicable.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

7.4.1 Not applicable.

7.5 TRADE UNION

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

7.6.1 Not applicable.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

7.7.1 See attached report in terms of analysis of the audits.

7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

7.8.1 N/A

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 Not applicable.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the report is received by the Committee for oversight and comment.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 **Appendix 1 – Quality Assurance Highlight Report.**

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Not applicable.